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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
PAUL W. RAINWATER

October 1, 2008

R. David Paulison
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street SW
Washington, DC 20472

Dear Administrator Paulison:

As the Governor Authorized Representative, I request that FEMA create and implement a Direct Housing Mission for Louisiana to cover the housing needs created by the effects of both Hurricanes Gustav and Ike. It is imperative that immediate housing options exist for residents in communities where rental resources are limited and where residents must remain close to their jobs and communities. The State of Louisiana will work in direct partnership with local parish officials in determining housing needs and support local decisions in developing temporary housing solutions utilizing federal assistance.

On September 1, 2008, and September 12, 2008, respectively, Louisiana was severely damaged by Hurricanes Gustav and Ike. Singularly, each was a major disaster; combined these storms amount to a catastrophic event for the state. At the time of these two hurricanes, Louisiana was in the midst of recovery from the largest disasters in U.S. history – Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

In the most impacted parishes, there are immediate housing needs for households unable to return to their homes. More than 120,000 homes received some damage. In Cameron parish, it is estimated that more than 4,000 homes were damaged. In Terrebonne, approximately 2,000 homes were flooded. Of the 43 parishes that received an Individual Assistance designation, 17 rural parishes were particularly hard hit. The state expects FEMA to provide Temporary Housing Units in these areas as soon as possible, recognizing that additional parishes may be declared eligible for federal assistance.

With over 430,000 registrations for assistance, and over 10,000 households receiving rental or transitional shelter assistance, the state has identified portions of the state where the need for housing solutions exceeds the current supply of available units. While the state is still working closely with FEMA to assess its housing needs for residents impacted by these two storms, it is imperative that solutions are developed immediately.

In accordance with FEMA's 2008 Disaster Housing Plan, a state-led Joint Housing Solutions Task Force convened to identify needs, validate resources and explore options to address the housing needs. The State of Louisiana will prioritize the needs for temporary housing in coordination with parish leaders to ensure that the plan meets the specific needs of each locality and its residents. The state requests that a number of housing solutions available under FEMA's 2008 Disaster Housing Plan be implemented to provide immediate and long-term solutions for our residents whose housing units have been damaged by Hurricanes Gustav and Ike. These include:

- Utilizing available rental units
- Utilizing other federal housing stock (USDA, VA, HUD, etc.)
- Utilizing available rental resources under HUD
- Employing Mobile Homes, Park Model units and other alternative forms of acceptable THUs (at request of parish and/or municipal officials)
- Rehabilitating rental units not in commerce now
- Employing Cottages and other Alternative Models for interim housing (with a commitment to reimburse the state if the state is able to construct them in a timelier manner than FEMA)
- Authorizing Permanent Housing Construction
- Accelerating a program for the sale of THUs to homeowners who qualify through FEMA
- Donating THUs to Volunteer Agencies who may assist renters and other individuals who may not qualify to purchase the THU
- Other available alternatives

The first priority will be to utilize available rental units in proximity to damaged homes and rental units. In those parishes with a shortage of rental units, alternative models will be sought as a priority to keep families in close proximity of their communities and jobs. It is vital to the state to get the Direct Housing Mission approved so that pre-placement interviews can begin to help us further refine the need.

I am grateful for the support your staff has provided and request your prompt consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Paul W. Rainwater
Executive Director